NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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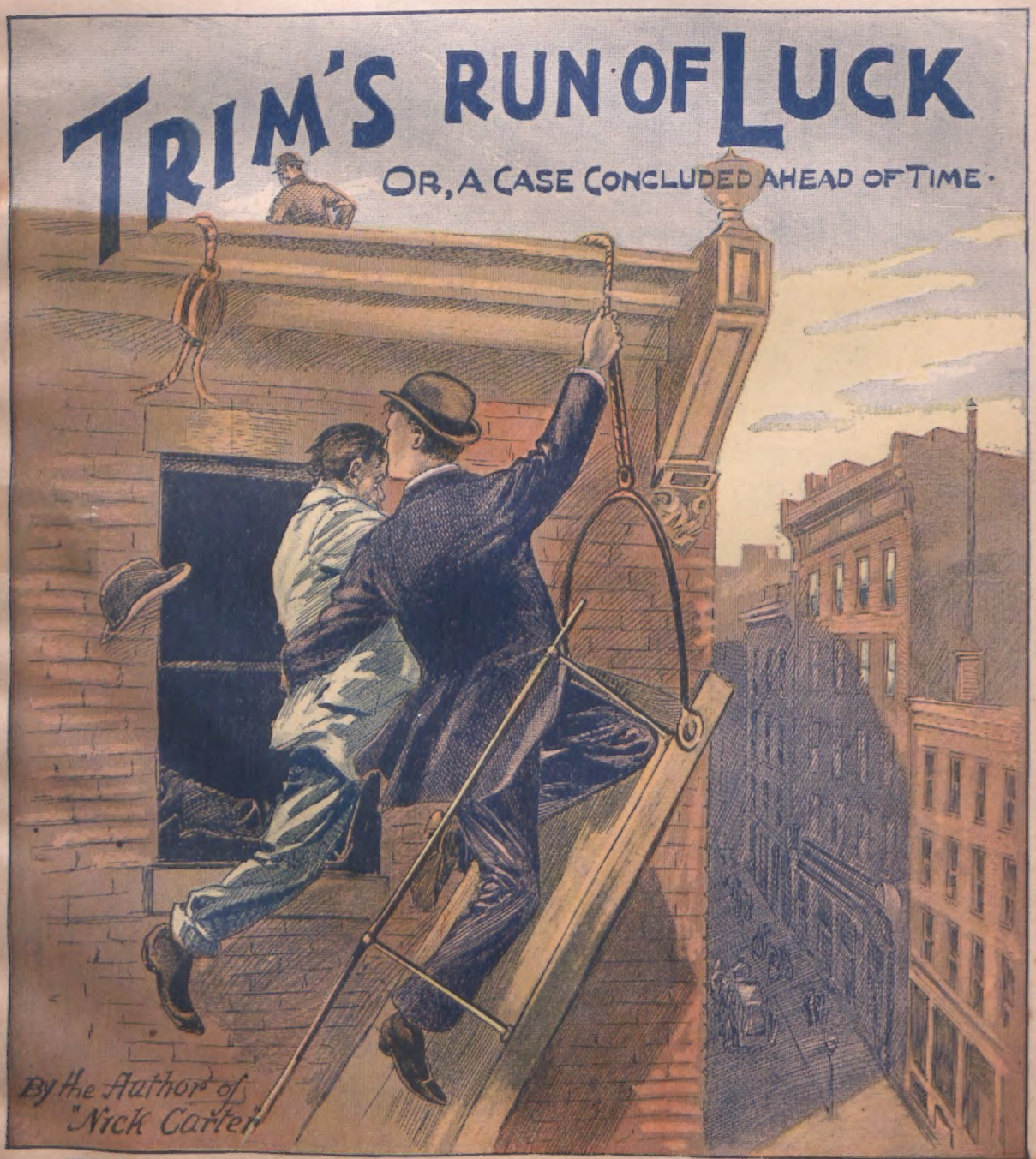

By the Author of "Nick Carter"

TRIM SEIZES THE UNCUT ROPE AND SWINGS BOTH HIMSELF AND PRISONER TOWARD AN OPEN WINDOW.

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TRIM'S RUN OF LUCK;

OR,

A Case Concluded Ahead of Time.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

New York, April 18, 189—.

My Dear Trim: I think you handled the matter of Miss De Leon's emerald very skilfully and most men would regard the case as finished. I agree with you, however, that no case is ever finished until the last scoundrel in it has been brought to punishment, and I therefore approve of your making an attempt to run down Paul Campo. But this man may keep you on the chase for a year or more. If he is connected with the secret society of Nanigos, and suspects that you think so, it is more than likely that he will keep out of your way, and by this time he may be a thousand miles from New Orleans.

The chances are, my boy, that it will be many a day before you come across Paul Campo again. However, you know the circumstances better than I do, and if you think there is a fighting chance of capturing him without much delay, you may try for it. Suppose we say one week? If you haven't got on his track within seven days from the receipt of this letter, drop the case until you can give it more time in the future.

I know that you will have a busy week of it, and I have no suggestions to make as to how you should spend it, for you are on the ground and can judge better than, Yours truly, Nicholas Carter.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOODOO.

"What's Grey going to pull off this eve?"

"From the looks of the stage at the front end of the room I should say it might be private theatricals."

"The stage isn't big enough."

"That's so, and there's no curtain."

"Perhaps it will be some kind of sleight-of-hand performance."

"Maybe. There's young Grey with a knowing grin on his face. I'll ask him."

This conversation between two young men was held in the library of a stylish house on St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans.

Mr. Grey, the owner, had invited a large party of friends to pass the evening at his house.

All were confident that they would have a good time, for Mr. Grey was famous for furnishing odd and interesting entertainments for his guests.

As usual nobody knew just what was

on the programme, and there was a great deal of curiosity about it.

One of the men referred to approached a boy and said:

"Well, Don, if it's a fair question what's the show going to be?"

"The old man has found a voodoo," was the smiling response.

"A voodoo!"

"Yep."

"The real thing?"

"So he says."

"And is he going to have him right here, in his own parlor?"

"Of course! Did you ever know the old man to weaken when he'd got a new idea in his nut?"

"No, it's just like him, but a voodoo! What t'll!"

"And black as night, too."

"Whew! but of course being genuine he must be black."

"And talks only a jargon that none of us can understand."

"Then how——"

"Oh! there's a woman comes along at the same price. She's the voodoo's sister, I believe, and she translates what his nobs has to say."

"I see, but where did your father rake up the fellow?"

"Oh, I don't know, somewhere in the swamp I guess at the outskirts of the city."

"What is his dark highness going to do to amuse us?"

"He's a fortune teller."

"Oh!"

"He looks at your hand, you know, and reads your past and future."

"Bully for him! I'll see if he can tell me how my deal in cotton is going to come out."

"I reckon he can do it."

"Do you believe in his power?"

"I do and you can gamble on it."

"Well, there's no doubt that some of those niggers know a heap more than we give them credit for."

The inquirer returned to his friend to tell him the news and the latter seemed greatly interested in it.

It may be well to explain that in the South, and especially in Louisiana, voodoos are generally black people who are supposed to have supernatural powers; they are sometimes referred to as witches.

Generally they practice their arts in secret and oftentimes create a great deal of trouble by arousing the fears of the ignorant blacks and by conducting a strange ceremonies that sometimes are said to involve the sacrifice of human lives.

To have the spell of a voodoo cast upon one is thought to be the worst misfortune possible.

In the North the slang word "hoodoo" is used by way of a joke to indicate that a person is fated to be unlucky.

In the South the same word with a slightly different spelling is used seriously by the ignorant classes, and among the educated there are not a few who have a real fear of it.

Usually it is only the blacks themselves who know who the voodoos are or where they may be found; therefore it was a great novelty to introduce a genuine voodoo into a gathering of society people.

As the word passed around from one to another among Mr. Grey's guests the greatest interest was expressed in the event and many were those who said that they should take the opportunity to have their fortunes told.

Among them was a young lady who showed so much interest in the matter that she attracted a good deal of interest attention to herself.

Her face changed color when she learned that a voodoo was to be present, and for a moment she looked actually frightened.

One of the men who had been first to set the information going said to the other:

"There's that daisy, Miss De Leon. If I'm not mistaken she'll have a tussle with his nibs, the voodoo, for I understand that she and all her family are superstitious."

"She looks tired," said the other.

"Yes, and I'll bet you the drinks that she will be more so when she gets through with the nigger."

"Let's ask her if she's going to take a shy at the future."

They moved across the room to where the young lady was standing with several others.

"Well, Miss De Leon," said one of the men, "are you going to show your hand in this game?"

"Certainly," was the reply in a low voice. "I could wish for nothing better."

"You take it seriously! You surely don't believe——"

"I certainly do believe that these people have wonderful powers, and I never was so anxious in my life to look into my own future."

"And do you think that they can forestall events correctly?"

"Yes. Haven't you heard many stories about their wonderful success in that way?"

"I have, but I supposed there must be some trick about it."

"I think not, but anyhow I shall test the matter to-night."

"Well, Miss De Leon, I hope he will foretell a happy future for you."

"Thank you, but I fear—— Ah! There is Mr. Carter."

The young lady, whose face had continued pale while discussing the prospect of having her fortune told by the voodoo, now flushed slightly as she crossed the room to speak to one of the guests who had been among the last to arrive.

It was our friend Trim, undisguised for once, but nevertheless out for business.

"Good evening, Miss, De Leon," he said politely, as the young lady approached him.

She gave him her hand with a little hesitation, and looking keenly at him responded:

"This is a great surprise, Mr. Carter. I thought you had started for the North."

"I've got to hang on a while longer," said Trim.

"Do you intend to remain in New Orleans?" she asked nervously.

Trim did not show that he thought anything of her questions, but he said to himself that she seemed mighty anxious to learn his movements.

"She's got a good deal on her mind," thought Trim, "and I'd give something if I could know whether she suspects what I am here for.

"I wonder if she dreams that the only reason I asked for an invitation to this thing was because I wanted a chance to study her."

"A few days," he said aloud. "I never know just where I'm going to turn up next."

"You must have so much to do," she murmured. "Have you been introduced to my mother yet?"

"No, she was unable to see me when I called at your country house."

"She is much better now and will want to see you; let me introduce you."

Miss De Leon conducted Trim across the parlor to a corner where a few of the guests were seated and conversing quietly.

An elderly lady occupied a large easy chair.

"Mamma," said Miss De Leon approaching her, "this is Mr. Carter."

"I'm glad to see you, sir," Madam De Leon responded. "Please excuse me from rising, I'm not yet well enough ——"

"Don't trouble yourself," interrupted Trim. "I'm glad you're well enough to be out."

"Oh, I am quite strong now," she said, "the robbery of our emerald was really a great shock to me, and I was so glad when it was restored that I began to grow stronger at once. I don't know how I can thank you——"

"Please don't try," said Trim with a light laugh, "it was only a part of my regular work, I assure you."*

"Mr. Carter," said Miss De Leon suddenly, "have you heard what entertainment Mr. Grey has provided for the night?"

"I have not," he answered, "but I should like to know if you will tell me."

"I will," she said moving a little to one side as other guests came up to speak to her mother.

"It just struck me," she continued, "that I wouldn't speak of it before my mother. Mr. Grey is going to have a voodoo here."

"Well, well!"

"You believe in them, do you not, Mr. Carter?"

"I believe they're oftentimes mischief-makers."

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*The matter to which Madam De Leon referred was the loss and recovery of a valuable emerald called the "Green Eye." This affair has been described fully in "Trim in the Crescent City," No. 23 New Nick Carter Library.

"But don't you believe they're able to read the future?"

Trim shook his head.

"I do!" the girl insisted, "and I shall certainly ask him to look at my hand. I was never so anxious to know what is going to happen to me."

At this moment Mr. Grey announced in a few words that he had persuaded one of the most famous voodoos in the State to be present.

"He has just arrived," Mr. Grey concluded," and all here will have the opportunity of having their hands examined and their fates foretold by this man.

"You will please come up one at a time in any order that you may choose."

Having said this he turned and bowed toward an open door and immediately a tall black man entered, accompanied by a slender woman whose features, though dark, did not look like those of a negro.

Both were fantastically dressed. They wore brightly-colored turbans upon their heads and shawls that covered them from head to foot.

Their wrists were adorned with bracelets and there were rings upon their fingers.

The voodoo himself wore huge earrings. He was a solemn-looking fellow and everybody in the room became very silent as he took his place upon the platform. Then there was a moment of hesitation.

"Now, then, ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Grey. "Here is your opportunity, don't wait."

With a nervous laugh, a young lady advanced to the platform and held out her hand to the voodoo.

"I'm not afraid," she said mockingly.

The voodoo examined the palm and the back of her hand, talking rapidly in a low tone all the time.

What he said could not be understood by anybody present, because the words were unfamiliar.

The woman who accompanied him translated what he said into English, but in such a low tone that no one heard except the young lady who was having her hand examined.

After a time she left the platform and rejoined the guests. She was smiling, but she looked puzzled and surprised.

"It is certainly wonderful," she said; "of couse he never had heard anything about me and yet he told my past very accurately and——"

"Well, what about the future?" somebody asked.

"I'm not going to tell what he said about that," she responded, "we will see."

It was evident that the young lady was very much impressed by what the voodoo had said.

Her place on the platform was promptly taken by another who returned to the company later with similar expressions of surprise and interest.

Then for twenty minutes or so there was a regular procession of guests to the platform and in every instance the person whose hand had been examined reported that the voodoo's vision was wonderfully correct.

Trim, who looked on from a distance without taking much interest in the performance, believed that this was some clever trick on the part of Mr. Grey.

"He has primed some intimate friend," thought the detective, "with facts about the guests and fixed him up in that interesting fashion so that he wont be recognized, and thus is able to make the guests take these things seriously."

At last Miss De Leon, who had been watching the performance silently, arose suddenly and went to the platform.

"It has taken her some time to get her courage up," thought Trim.

He saw her give her hand to the voodoo, who glanced at it and started violently.

She drew away her hand at once and stepped back with a low exclamation.

The woman who did the translating said something to her in an undertone, after which Miss De Leon reached out her hand again.

This time the woman took it and after a moment turned to the voodoo with a very grave expression on her face.

The two conversed for a moment in their strange jargon, and then the performance proceeded as before.

The voodoo examined Miss De Leon's hand, muttering rapidly in his jargon and the dark woman translated.

When Miss De Leon left the platform

there was a very troubled look upon her face.

Two or three friends jokingly asked her for the result of the test.

"He told my past remarkably well," she answered faintly.

"And the future?"

Miss De Leon shook her head.

"He says he can't!" she answered and hurriedly withdrew into the library.

At this time the library was unoccupied, all the guests having assembled in the main drawing-room.

Trim quietly edged his way into the library and saw Miss De Leon standing with her hands before her face.

She was evidently making a great effort to regain her self-possession.

"Miss De Leon," Trim began.

She turned upon him suddenly with a startled expression that immediately became one of relief.

"Oh, Mr. Carter!" she exclaimed, "do go up and ask him about my future."

"You asked him about that yourself, didn't you?"

"Yes, but he would not say antyhing, not one word; it was all about my past! "I don't care anything about my past, I know that only too well. It is the future that I want to know!"

She spoke bitterly and with considerable excitement.

"I am afraid," said Trim gently, "that you're taking the thing too seriously. I suppose it is all a practical joke of Mr. Grey's——"

"Oh, no! no!" she interrupted earnestly, "it is wicked to think of it as a joke. I must know what he was concealing from me!

"I can trust you, Mr. Carter; do go up and have your hand examined or pretend to or something, and make him tell you what it is that he concealed from me."

"I will try," Trim answered, "and meantime don't be anxious. Joke or not, there is no reason for taking this fellow's actions so seriously."

"Do find out for me!" was Miss De Leon's response.

Trim, seeing that it was the only thing to do to calm her, took his place near the platform where another guest was then being examined and waited for his opportunity.

It came in a moment and he stepped up promptly.

"You needn't bother to read my hand," he said calmly holding it out so that no one in the company should suspect what he was doing.

"What does the gentleman wish then?" asked the woman.

"The young lady," Trim answered, "who was here before this last one, is dissatisfied because you did not tell her future. She wishes me to learn what you have to say about it."

The woman turned to the voodoo and spoke to him in their jargon; after a moment of thought the voodoo responded and the woman translated:

"There is nothing to say."

"You'd better think of something," returned Trim quietly. "I don't want to make any trouble for you or to cause a scene here, but the young lady is very much distressed.

"You may injure her health by carrying this thing too far; you'd better tell me what to say to her."

Again the voodoo and his sister conversed and the latter again translated.

"There is no future."

"Hey, what do you mean?" exclaimed Trim.

"He can't foretell the future when there is none," said the woman. "It is all done. Her past is here and here present there is nothing else."

CHAPTER II.

A PROPHESY ALMOST FULFILLED.

Trim felt not a little startled by these words; they seemed to mean a great deal.

The young detective was not superstitious. On the contrary, it was the fact that he did not regard the voodoo as possessing the gift of prophecy that made him suspect a serious meaning.

He kept his hand extended while he looked the voodoo squarely in the eyes.

The black man returned the gaze steadily, seeming to be not in the least disturbed by it.

If any of the guests in the drawing-room were looking at Trim at that moment they must have supposed that he was greatly interested in hearing an account of his own fate.

"Will the gentleman have us ready his

hand?" the woman murmured after a moment.

The voodoo muttered something in jargon which she translated:

"He says there is a great deal of interest in the lines of your hands."

"I reckon there is!" Trim answered bluntly. "I don't need a voodoo to tell me that."

The voodoo's brow contracted slightly and there was a sullen look in his eye.

"Ah!" thought Trim, "you understand English, don't you! I suspected as much."

"Never mind the past," he said aloud, "what about the future?"

The voodoo bent over Trim's hand for a moment and presently the woman translated what he said.

"Your future is dark and troublesome; you are in great danger. You may come out alive for the line of long life is strong, but such lines are easily snapped after all, especially when knives are crossed upon them."

"That's interesting," remarked Trim sarcastically. "Are there any knives crossed upon the life line of Miss De Leon's hand?"

The woman translated this question into the voodoo's jargon, although there was no doubt that the latter had understood it.

The black man remained silent for a moment and then announced that he had nothing more to say to the gentleman.

"All right," said Trim, "but you might tell him that it would be just as well to look out that no mischief comes to Miss De Leon, do you understand?"

The woman looked at him in a frightened way while the voodoo scowled.

"I reckon you both understand," said Trim and he left the platform.

His place was immediately taken by another of the guests, and two or three of the few to whom he had been introduced asked him about the result of the examination.

"It don't amount to anything!" Trim declared contemptuously.

The young man was considerably disgusted at the serious way these intelligent people took the thing, but he spoke as he did more for the sake of reassuring Miss De Leon, who was waiting for him anxiously at the library door.

"Well," said Mr. Grey as Trim passed him, "you're the only one who seems to think it does not amount to anything, but I hope you find it interesting?"

"Oh, yes," responded Trim, "it's a very good trick, but nothing more than that."

Some of the persons who heard this looked incredulous; others were evidently offended that the young man did not believe in the voodoo's power as they did.

"What did he say, Mr. Carter?" asked Miss De Leon eagerly.

"Nothing of any importance whatever. He admits that he cannot read your future——"

"But he reads the future of others!"

"Nonsense, Miss De Leon, how can you say that when nobody knows as yet whether his guesses are good or bad?"

"Didn't he read your future, though?"

"He gave a guess that anybody who knew my business could have made."

Miss De Leon was not convinced. She declared at first that she was going to the platform again to insist that the voodoo should tell her about her future.

Trim persuaded her not to do this and tried his best to calm her fears, but without much result.

She was evidently in a very nervous condition when a few minutes later the voodoo and his sister withdrew.

It was then nearly midnight.

Trim was somewhat irritated at finding himself placed as he so often was, with a desire to be in two places at once.

His one purpose in remaining in New Orleans at this time was to get on the track of Paul Campo, whom the detective belived to be at the head of a branch of the Nanigos, a secret society of criminals whom he had completely broken up in Mexico, as told in a previous number of this library.

In the course of his search for the emerald known as the "Green Eye," which belonged to the De Leon's, Trim had learned that Campo and Miss De Leon were at one time engaged to be married.

This engagement had been broken off when the family learned that Campo was not a man of the best character.

Trim had traced the jewel to Campo and had compelled him to give it up.

It was not until after this was accomplished that the detective suspected that Campo was anything more than an ordinary gambler.

Campo had disappeared and Trim's purpose in keeping watch of Miss De Leon was to get some information of Campo's whereabouts.

He believed that the unfortunate young lady was still infatuated with Campo and that the latter would try to see her.

"Nick Carter has given me a week to run the fellow down," thought Trim, "and I haven't yet got the ghost of an idea as to where he is, except that I suspect that Miss De Leon's nervousness is a good deal due to her knowledge of him and her suspicions that I am laying for him.

"It looks to me as if she would have a meeting with Campo soon, and that's why I want to keep as near to her as I conveniently can; but now comes this voodoo with his strange threat, for it can't be anything else but a threat when he declares that Miss De Leon has no future.

"Besides that there must be something queer in his remark about crossed knives—that was the sign of the Nanigos.

"The voodoo might not have had that in mind; crossed knives to him may mean a fight with swords, or anything of that kind.

"At the same time I shan't be satisfied to let him out of my sight until I know just where I can lay hands on him.

"Miss De Leon may not go home for an hour yet, and even if she does I don't see anything for it but to leave her for a time and follow up the voodoo."

These thoughts were rapidly passing through Trim's mind while the voodoo and his sister were preparing to leave.

Trim saw them receive a handsome fee for their work and heard them decline the offer of a carriage to take them home.

The had no sooner left the house than he made an excuse for leaving and followed them.

It is not necessary to describe Trim's experience in shadowing the pair; it was a task that he accomplished without difficulty and without adventure.

Within half an hour after the time they left Mr. Grey's house he saw them enter a building in one of the poor streets of the city, and having made a mental note of the locality, he returned as rapidly as possible to St. Charles Avenue.

He arrived back at Mr. Gray's just as most of the guests were departing in a body.

He then learned that Madam and Miss De Leon had departed almost immediately after the voodoo went away.

Trim started to go to his hotel.

He was in a very dissatisfied frame of mind, for he felt that his evening's work had not come to anything, and he also felt more certain than ever that Miss De Leon could tell him if she would about the movements of Campo.

He was strongly inclined to go to the apartment house where the De Leons had taken up their residence after returning from their country house.

They had a city residence as well, but it was now being repaired and could not be occupied.

They had returned from the country earlier than was their intention, because after the affair of the emerald Madame De Leon had not felt like staying in such a solitary place; so they were now occupying a flat in a building that Trim could have passed on his way to the hotel without going much out of his course.

It seemed rather absurd to think that he could learn anything by passing that building after midnight, but he could not help thinking that he ought to go there.

He put his hand in his pocket as he approached a street corner and took hold of a coin.

"I'll look at it," he said, "when I come to the light of that street lamp yonder, and if it's heads I'll go to the De Leon's flat; if it's tails I'll go on to the hotel.

"I might as well trust to luck for guidance this time."

He had just come to the street corner and taken his hand with the coin in it from his pocket, when a man going at full speed ran into him.

Trim stumbled from the force of the shock and more for the purpose of keeping his balance than anything else, caught hold of the runner.

"Hi, there, what's the matter!" he ex-

claimed. "Do you want to knock a man's wind all out of him?"

"Oh, Lord!" the man gasped, "are you a doctor?"

"No, I'm not," Trim answered, "but if that's what you're after don't let me delay you!"

The man started on and then stopped suddenly and wrung his hands.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I clean forgot!"

"Forgot what?" asked Trim, who had not yet looked at his coin to see which way it would guide him.

"Dr. Ambrose!" replied the man; "I was going to find him and I forgot that he had left town yesterday. Where shall I go now?"

"What's the matter, anyway?" asked Trim.

"It's murder, sir, I think, and any doctor is likely to be too late."

"Murder!" cried Trim suddenly interested, "where? who? what about it?"

"In the Crescent apartment house, sir," the man responded; "some new people who moved in only a day or two ago, the De Leons——"

Trim heard no more. He was off at full speed in the direction of the De Leon's residence.

"I wonder which way the coin would have told me to go?" he thought as he ran.

It was too late to find out then, for at the man's words Trim had dropped the coin in his pocket again.

When Trim arrived at the house he found three or four frightened servants standing in the main entrance.

With a rapid glance he took in their faces so that he should know them again.

He darted past them up the stairs, for the elevator had stopped running for the night.

They stood aside as he entered, for all of them doubtless suppose that he was a doctor.

He bounded up the stairs and arrived a moment later at the top of the third flight, where he found Madam De Leon supporting herself by the bannister and apparently waiting for him.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Carter?" she gasped. "I was hoping for a physician, but I am almost as much relieved to see you!"

"What has happened?" Trim demanded, giving her his arm in order to steady her as she turned into her apartment.

"My daughter!" she answered with a moan. "Oh, how can I tell you!"

"Don't try," said Trim. "Let me take you to the sitting room, where you must remain quietly and leave everything to me. Just tell me where your daughter is to be found."

"In her room," the mother answered, "the butler will show you."

Having assisted Madam De Leon to a chair, Trim went down the private hall of the apartment and found a colored butler standing tremblingly beside a closed door.

"Is she in here?" Trim asked.

"Yes, sah," stammered the darkey. "I don't dares to go in myself!"

Trim opened the door and entered at once.

The room was very light, for two gas jets were burning full on.

Trim noted at once that there were signs of disorder in the room, but he paid no attention to details at the moment, for what commanded his attention was the fact that Miss De Leon was lying upon the floor apparently dead.

There was a spot of blood upon the carpet by her side and evidence of a knife wound near her throat.

"This was what was meant," he thought, "by the words that Miss De Leon had no future."

It was no time then to regret that he had not followed Miss De Leon home, no time to speculate upon the voodoo's knowledge of what was about to happen, for a hasty examination showed him that the young lady was not dead and he believed that there was a chance to save her life.

Trim had had too much experience in such matters not to know what to do first.

There was no need of his waiting for a physician. He set to work quietly and quickly to cut away the clothing from the wound and staunch the flow of blood.

One thing he did need, for which it seemed he would have to call assistance. ance.

He wished to force some kind of stimulant between the girl's lips in order to

restore her to consciousness if even for only a moment.

The stimulant might help to save her life, and if it did not it might give her strength to tell how she had been stabbed, and by whom.

There was no doubt in Trim's mind that it was a case of attempted murder, for the position of the wound showed that it could not easily have been made by herself, and besides there was a slight gash upon her right hand which Trim reasoned had been made in an attempt to ward off the terrible blow.

The detective was about to call for the butler to bring him some liquor or wine, when he noticed that a decanter and two glasses stood upon the dresser.

One of these had a little liquid in it, the other had not been used.

Trim filled the empty glass with wine, and after several patient efforts succeeded in forcing a small quantity into Miss De Leon's mouth.

She opened her eyes after a moment and Trim was certain that she recognized him.

It seemed impossible, however, for her to regain complete consciousness, and fearing that any effort to arouse her might cause her to lose her hold on life, Trim gave it up.

At this point there were hurried steps in the hall, the door was opened and a physician entered.

Trim saw Madam De Leon standing in the hall as if too terrified to come into the room.

"Your daughter is not dead," Trim said, "and I believe the doctor will tell you as I do, that there is a chance that she may recover."

"Thank God!" Madam De Leon cried hysterically. "I owe you her life then, Mr. Carter, as I owe you the recovery——"

There was no doubt that she was about to add "of the emerald," or words to that effect, but she stopped abruptly, looking with staring eyes at the bureau.

Trim only half observed her, for he was helping the physician, who had promptly begun an examination of the injured girl.

Trim observed with considerable relief that the physician understood his business thoroughly, and after a moment he stood up, leaving the experienced doctor to handle the case alone.

He saw then that Madam De Leon was leaning against the bureau, her lips parted, her eyes staring hard at a little plush box that lay there on the top.

"What is it, madame?" asked Trim.

"That," she gasped in a whisper, pointing to the box.

Trim recognized it at once. It was the box in which he had seen Miss De Leon place the emerald called the "green eye" on the day when he returned it to her possession at the country house.

The box was now empty.

"Gone!" exclaimed Madam De Leon, "gone a second time, and almost with my daughter's life! She may die, but I am sure we shall never see the jewel again. Ah! why did we not replace it in the safety deposit vaults?"

She was in great distress and yet Trim standing before her and looking also at the empty jewel case, could hardly repress a smile.

"Mr. Carter," exclaimed Madam De Leon excitedly, "you don't seem to comprehend. Not only has my daughter been murdered but this valuable jewel has been stolen again."

"I understand perfectly, madame," Trim answered, "but your daughter has not been murdered, I feel sure that she will recover and as for the jewel you may give yourself no anxiety about it."

"Ah!" she groaned, "you detectives have great confidence in your ability, but it isn't likely that you will have an opportunity to trace this a second time."

"I shall restore your jewel to you within twenty-four hours," said Trim quietly; "as for your daughter, let the physician speak."

"The wound is not serious," the doctor said, as both turned to him for a report. "Miss De Leon is suffering more from shock than anything else, but I think she will recover.

"It is quite likely that she will be unconscious for several days, but during all that time she will be growing stronger, and when she does recover consciousness she can probably tell you clearly how this thing happened."

"Great Scott!" thought Trim, "this

seems to me like a change in the luck—I thought luck was coming my way with a vengeance when that fellow ran into me and gave me the hint about what had happened.

"Now it seems to me as if there was a turn, for if this girl can't speak for several days, my week may be out before she can tell me anything about the case."

"Mr. Carter!" exclaimed Madam De Leon breathlessly, "what can you mean about restoring the jewel within twenty-four hours? Do you know how this happened, and all about it so soon?"

"I don't know all about it," Trim answered, "but with your permission I will find out as much as I can to-night, and unless I am occupied in arresting the man who attempted to murder your daughter, I will bring you the emerald at exactly noon to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

EVIDENCE AGAINST THE BROTHER.

Madam De Leon was too much overcome to talk longer even if Trim had been willing to continue the conversation.

The physician, having attended to the injured daughter, found his hands full in caring for the mother.

The latter was taken to her room, where she was put to sleep with a drug and the daughter was removed to another room and placed in charge of trained nurses.

She was not allowed to remain in her own chamber because the detective wished to be free to work there as long as he needed to.

When the patients had been disposed of Trim called the servants to him and examined them.

He was not long in learning of matters that seemed to be of great importance in the case.

He heard the butler's story first.

"I dun wait up for the misses and Miss Clara," the butler said, "as dey tole me to. Dey got back 'bout quarter past twelve."

"Who were in the flat beside yourself during the evening?" asked Trim.

"De cook and de chambermaid, sah, dat's all."

"And they are here still?"

"Yes, sah."

"What happened when the ladies came in?"

"I hear dem in de outer hall, an' was gwine ter let them in."

"Didn't they have a latch key?"

"Yes, sah, dey did, and dey let themselves in wid it. You see it was dis way

"I dun bin sittin' in de dinin' room waitin' for dem when I heerd dere voices; dey come up on de last trip ob de elevator an' stood in de outer hall, an' I heerd de missus say, 'why don't you open de door, Clara?' and den I hear Miss Clara say, 'I dun lost my key, mamma!' "

"Well, what then?"

"De missus, she say how provokin' where did you lose it and Miss Clara, she say, 'I dunno what's become ob it.'

"Den de missus she say, cross like, she hab to find her own key. By dat time I was goin' to open de door myself, and jest as I got dere dey opened it."

"Who opened it?"

"De missus."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sah."

"What makes you sure?"

"I saw de latch-key in de missus' hand."

"Ah! what did they do then?"

"Dey went directly to dere rooms."

"Very well—go on."

"I dun put out de lights an' was a gwine ter bed when I dun heer' a scuffle or suffin an' a scream an' I run out into de hall ter see what was de de matter."

"When you say you went into the hall—do you mean the stairway or the private hall of the apartment?"

"De private hall, sah."

"Well, what did you see?"

"Nuthin' at all, sah."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sah; sartin sure, except dat de missus come a hurryin' out ob her room; I seed her."

"Very well, what did you do?"

"We hollered to Miss Clara and knocked on her door. Dere was no answer an' so we opened it."

"Was it locked?"

"No, sah."

"Well."

The negro shuddered.

"We found Miss Clara——"

"Just as she was when I came?"

"Yes, sah. I didn't darst ter go into de room at all."

"Who was it went for the doctor?"

"De janitor of de buildin', sah."

"Did you wake him up?"

"Yes, sah—I rang his bell from de kitchen and hollered ter him down de lumbwaiter."

"Very well. Now I want you to tell me what happened during the evening while Madam De Leon and her daughter were away."

"Nuffin at all happened, sah. Me and de cook played casino."

"You needn't bother about that. Didn't anybody call?"

"Oh, yes, sah—dar did."

"That's what I want to know about. Who was it?"

"Mr. Richard, sah."

"Richard De Leon?"

"Yes, sah; Miss Clara's brudder."

"Ah, yes, what time was that?"

"'Bout half past eleven, sah."

"Well."

"Dar ain't nothin' ter tell 'bout it, sah."

"Oh, yes there is—what did he come for?"

"He say he come ter see his sister."

"What did you tell him?"

"I tole him she gone to Mr. Grey's an' not home yet."

"What did he say then?"

"He say he reckon he wait."

"Did you let him in?"

"Oh, yes, sah."

"Where did he go?"

"Into de settin' room."

"And where did you go?"

"Went back to de kitchen."

"Was the cook there then?"

"No, sah, she'd just gone ter her room."

"And what did you do?"

"I picked up the cards we'd been playin' wid an' den sat down, dat was all."

"You left Richard De Leon in the sitting room, did you?"

"Yes, sah."

"How long did he stay?"

"'Bout ten minutes, I should think, sah."

"And what did he say when he went away?"

"He say he reckon he wouldn't wait any longer, but would come to-morrow."

"Did you let him out?"

"No, sah, he let himself out."

"Ah! indeed! and where were you?"

"In de kitchen as I tole you."

"Did you see him go out?"

The darkie looked puzzled.

"He dun go out sure 'nough, sah," he said after a moment.

"That isn't the point, my friend, did you see him go out?"

"No, sah, but I dun here de door close."

"Did you stay in the kitchen then?"

"Yes, sah, for suffin like ten or fifteen minutes; den I went into the dining room an' I stayed dar until the missus come as I tole you."

"Are you very sure that nobody else called during the evening?"

The darkie turned his eyes away from Trim and hesitated.

"Come, this is an important matter," said Trim sternly, "who else called?"

"Nobody, sah; I don't know as nobody else called."

"Very well, then—tell the cook to come here."

From the cook Trim got about the same kind of information he had from the butler.

She would have told him about every deal in the game of casino if he had let her, but that did not interest the detective.

What was of importance was the fact that he succeeded in getting her to admit that early in the evening all three servants went out for a walk.

They were gone for fully an hour.

From the time they returned until Richard De Leon called it seemed quite certain that no one else had entered the flat.

When he had got through with the servants, Trim returned to the chamber where Miss De Leon had been struck down.

There were two windows in this room, both down and fastened.

There was a peculiarity of the lock on the window sashes that struck Trim at once. He raised one of the windows and looked out.

In front of him was the iron grating of

a fire escape from which a ladder went straight down the wall to the ground.

Having looked at it a moment he lowered the window and saw that the fastening worked of itself; that is, when the window was shut it was locked. It could not have been opened from the outside, but it was possible to close the window and lock it from the outside.

"That shows pretty clearly," thought Trim, "how the would-be murderer escaped, and it looks as if I already knew how the man got in here, although I confess to being sorry that the evidence points toward Richard De Leon.

"He was not on good terms with his sister, and I can't see therefore why he should have called here for any good purpose.

"It isn't at all certain that he left the house at the time the butler thinks he did.

"It would have been a simple enough thing for Richard to open and close the door with a slam and yet remain in the hallway.

"The stupid darkie in the kitchen wouldn't look out to see whether he had gone, and after a moment Richard might have tiptoed his way into his sister's room without attracting any attention.

"Richard De Leon is a scoundrel, as everybody knows.

"There is no doubt that he wouldn't hesitate to commit burglary, but I hardly think he would have the nerve if he had the will, to murder his sister.

"Ah! what's this?"

Trim stooped as he came to this thought and picked up a latch key from the floor between the bureau and the window. There was a blood stain upon it.

He took this key to the butler and asked if it was the one that fitted the apartment door.

"Yes, sah, dat's de one," the darkie answered, "you can prove it yourself by trying it."

Trim did not want to try it, for he feared that turning the key in the lock would scratch away that blood stain which he believed might be of importance to him later in the investigation.

He carefully wrapped the key in soft paper and put it in his pocketbook.

After this, the detective examined the janitor of the building and the elevator boy to learn what they knew about callers during the evening.

He could not get much satisfaction from them, although the elevator boy remembered well enough taking up a man whose description corresponded with that of Richard De Leon.

He could not be certain as to whether he had taken this man down again or not.

When he was asked about other people who had gone up and down during the evening he answered that there were a good many, some of them strangers.

Trim asked him to describe the strangers.

The boy was unable to give a clear description of anybody. As a matter of fact there are few people who can describe others so that an inquirer may recognize them.

At length Trim did the describing.

He wanted to know if there was among those who went up during the early evening a man who was tall, dark, foreign-looking, with a heavy mustache and so on, giving details of Campo's appearance.

At first the boy thought he had carried up such a person, then he was not sure of it, and at last became so confused that Trim saw that his testimony in such a matter was of no use whatever.

At length Trim, having carried his inquiries as far as he could, left the place for the night and returned to his hotel.

This was the famous St. Charles Hotel, and it was there that Richard De Leon lived. Trim went straight to the young man's room.

"The fellow seems to be driunk most of the time," the detective thought, "but if he was sober at half past eleven, it's pretty likely that he is in a reasonable condition now.

"Still, there isn't much probability that I shall find him in at this hour of the night. It's too early for him!"

He went directly to De Leon's door and knocked.

To his surprise he heard De Leon's voice bid him come in.

He opened the door and saw the young man in the act of placing an open book

face down upon a table at the further side of the room.

De Leon looked startled at sight of the detective.

"Ah!" he said, "what the deuce do you want now?"

"De Leon," said Trim, closing the door, "I've got to ask you to account for yourself between the hours of eleven-thirty and the present moment."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I say, and the sooner you make your movements clear to me the less trouble you'll have."

De Leon hesitated a moment and then exclaimed:

"I don't propose to be badgered by any detective like you, and I won't answer your qiustions; that's all there is to it. Leave my room or I'll ring for the porter to put you out!"

"Very well, then, if I go out you go out with me as a prisoner."

"On what charge?"

"The attempted murder of your sister."

"What!"

De Leon almost shouted this and from his manner Trim was convinced that the fellow was surprised, not so much at the charge as at the fact that an attempt had been made to kill his sister.

"That's the charge," said Trim, suddenly stepping across the room, "and this is part of my evidence."

Saying this he put his hand to raise the book that De Leon had laid down upon the table.

De Leon leaped forward to brush away Trim's hand and between them the book was thrown aside.

It fell to the floor and with it fell a large green stone.

It rolled across the floor toward a door that Trim discovered later opened upon De Leon's sleeping room.

At that moment the detective could not give his attention to the stone, for he was very much occupied with De Leon himself.

The latter attacked the detective and fought with great fury and surprising strength.

Trim would not have supposed that the youthful could be so stubborn a foe.

They wrestled for fully a half minute before the detective succeeded in throwing his man to the floor.

Even then there was plenty of fight in De Leon, and for a full half minute more the two struggled upon the floor until the detective at last conquered his man and had him handcuffed; then as Trim stood up several employees of the hotel came running in to see what the racket was all about.

Trim did not offer to explain at first.

Leaving his man panting on the floor he went across the room to the chamber door to find the green stone.

It was not to be seen anywhere. The chamber door was partly open.

"The stone went out that way," thought Trim, "and it's a thousand to one that Paul Campo carried it." Then there was a curious smile upon his face.

"It's all right," he said to himself. "I shall restore the "green eye" to Madam De Leon at twelve o 'clock tomorrow, just as I promised to do, unless I should have the luck to nab Campo at that hour."

CHAPTER IV.

TRIM AND THE VOODOO.

Trim pushed the chamber door open and looked in.

One of the hotel clerks who did not know Trim's business and who supposed that the detective was an intruder, leaped upon him to pull him back.

"Here, there!" cried the clerk, "you're not going to get away so easily."

Trim caught the fellow by both elbows and held them so tightly that the clerk could not budge. Then in a quiet voice the detective asked:

"Does that door at the other side of the sleeping room open upon the main corridor?"

"Yes," the clerk answered, trying vainly to get away.

One or two others came up to assist the clerk.

"Now don't be foolish!" exclaimed Trim. "While you're standing here a gem worth one hundred thousand dollars is walking out of this house in the pocket of a thief."

This statement was received with looks of surprise.

Before anything else could be said the

landlord of the hotel entered accompanied by a policeman.

"What's going on any way?" the landlord demanded.

"I'll tell you after I've searched this room," Trim answered with a significant glance at the landlord.

The latter knew that Trim was a detective and accordingly nodded his head.

Trim let go of the clerk and made a hasty tour of the room. All he wished to do was to satisfy himself that nobody was concealed there.

This took but a few seconds, and when he returned to De Leon's sitting room he found the policeman helping De Leon to his feet.

"Handcuffed!" exclaimed the landlord in amazement. "Why, Mr. Carter, what does all this mean?"

"That's what I should like to know!" muttered De Leon in a low voice.

Trim was already as certain as he could be that De Leon had an accomplice who had been in the chamber while the struggle was going on in the sitting room, and who had come into the sitting room, picked up the stone and gone off with it while Trim's attention was taken with De Leon.

He hoped to force some information about this accomplice from De Leon, so he said:

"There has been a robbery and attempted murder at the Crescent apartment house.

"The criminal succeeded in getting an emerald worth one hundred thousand dollars, and he nearly succeeded in killing Miss Clara De Leon. I charge that man with both crimes."

Nobody was more overcome by this statement than De Leon himself. This was exactly what Trim had hoped for, but it did not result as the detective wished.

"I am not guilty of either crime," De Leon said, "and I will prove my innocence when the time comes.

"I wish you would tell me about my sister, for this is the first that I have heard that anything had happened to her."

Trim believed that De Leon was speaking the truth, but he was also convinced that the brother had knowledge of the robbery.

"If he sees," thought Trim, "that the evidence points all toward himself, he will be likely to confess what he knows and turn suspicion upon his accomplice."

Aloud he said:

"Miss De Leon and her mother had spent the evening at a friend's house; they returned shortly after midnight.

"Within an hour before they returned it is known that this man, Richard De Leon, called at the flat to see his sister ——"

"I went away before she returned," interrupted De Leon.

"You pretended to," Trim responded quickly. "Miss De Leon had not been in her room more than a very few minutes when she was attacked.

A knife was driven into her body and she was left for dead.

"The emerald I speak of was stolen from her dressing case, and when I came into this room a few minutes ago it was lying on the table there.

"It has since disappeared, but that doesn't make any difference, for I saw it with my own eyes rolling across the floor toward the chamber."

De Leon darted a frightened glance toward the chamber.

Will he tell what he knows?" thought Trim anxiously.

After a moment of hesitation, De Leon asked:

"Will my sister recover?"

"Small chances," responded Trim.

"Is there any need of my wearing these?" asked De Leon, holding up his manacled hands.

Trim saw from this that the young man would not make any confession at this time.

Perhaps because there were too many standing around and listening, perhaps there were other reasons.

He may have felt that as long as there was the slightest chance that his sister might recover, he would keep silent in the belief that so far as he was concerned his innocence of both crimes could be proved.

Whatever the reason, Trim was satisfied that it would be a loss of time to press the matter further, so he said, addressing the policeman:

"You'd better lock him up at once; as he is charged with attempted murder I advise you not to remove those handcuffs."

De Leon shrugged his shoulders at this, but said nothing.

The policeman accordingly prepared to take the prisoner to headquarters, Trim promising to go there also to make the necessary charge.

Before he left the hotel the detective asked the employees a number of questions, hoping to get some clew as to the accomplice who had entered the sitting room and taken the stone during the short but hard fight with De Leon.

There was no doubt in his mind that this accomplice had passed through the chamber and into the corridor and so down the stairs, but he gained nothing by his inquiries, for none of the employees could remember distinctly whether anybody had left the hotel at that time or not.

Campo was known by sight to two or three of them, and these were certain that Campo had not entered or left the hotel during that evening; in fact, they said they had not seen him for several days.

This, of course, meant nothing to Trim, for he believed that when Campo disappeared from his quarters near Lee Circle, he had not left the city, but had simply disguised himself and remained in or near his usual haunts.

The detective believed that De Leon's accomplice in the matter was none other than Campo, but he had no proof of it and he asked all his questions in the hope that some information might be gained that would point in that direction.

When he finally went to headquarters to make his charge against De Leon, he was as much in the dark as ever.

Having concluded his business at headquarters, he went at once to the house where he had tracked the voodoo.

"This thing is now in the hands of the police," he thought while on the way, "and there isn't anydoubt that they will believe Richard De Leon to be the robber and would-be murderer.

"Perhaps he is the man, but I doubt it. I begin to think that he really did leave the flat in the way that the butler described.

"If that is the case it is all the more important that I should find the accomplice and the real criminal, for I don't want Richard De Leon punished for a crime that he didn't commit.

"He's a bad one, but he's got enough of his own doings to answer for without being convicted of another's crimes.

"I must say that I've put him in a very bad position. It will doubtless be shown on investigation that he was in great need of money, and he may admit that he went to the flat for the purpose of raising money.

"His previous bad character will be against him. It will be mighty hard for him to prove that he was not in the flat at the time the crime took place.

"The whole thing will seem to be clinched by the fact that I saw the green stone upon his table and that he was trying to conceal it when I entered.

"The fact is then that I've got really two things to accomplish.

"One is to prove that Richard De Leon did not commit the crime with which I have charged him, and the other is to find the man who did commit it.

"At the same time it must be shown that De Leon was in it as an accomplice; that will be easy enough, I reckon, if I can once get on the track of the real man.

"I wonder how it would do to get the whole police force of New Orleans to hunting for Campo? Probably they couldn't find him.

"If they should succeed it wouldn't do any good because I should still lack the evidence to convict him of the crime.

"No, I've got to find him myself and find all the evidence, too, and it must be done within less than a week."

When Trim arrived at the voodoo's house he went straight up to the door and knocked upon it loudly.

Somewhat to his surprise it was opened at once and the voodoo himself stood there.

"Ah!" said Trim, "you were expecting me, were you?"

The voodoo looked coldly at the detective a moment and then turned and called, in his jargon, to his sister.

"I wouldn't do that," said Trim, "you

can speak English as well as you understand it."

"You are wiser than your years," answered the black man solemnly. "What do you want?"

"I want you to tell me where I shall find Paul Campo."

"I see," the voodoo said slowly, "you come to me professionally."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Trim sharply.

"I mean that you come to ask my services as a prophet of the future and a seer of distant things."

"I come to find out what you know," said Trim bluntly.

"It is the same thing," returned the voodoo, undisturbed by Trim's sharp tones.

"You were right in saying that I expected you. When you asked those questions about the unfortunate young lady who had no future, I knew that you would come to me later to learn more definitely about her.

"Everything is ready, and if you wish me to tell as much as the spirits will reveal of the future you may come in, but you must understand that now we are not in Mr. Grey's house and that the service for which he rewarded me there was complete at that time."

All this was said in a calm dignified manner and Trim was a good deal impressed by it.

"This fellow is something of a mystery to me," he reflected. "Maybe he really thinks that he aroused my superstitions and that he expected me to come just as he says.

"He demands an extra fee of me and that makes the thing look genuine.

"If he expected me to come for any other purpose, that is, if he had a job put up to do me mischief, it's likely that he would invite me right into the house without demanding a fee.

"I reckon I'll take the chance of learning something and go in."

"You understand me, I suppose?" the voodoo added.

"Yes," said Trim, "what's the price?"

"In a matter as important as this," the voodoo responded, "a white man has to pay five dollars. There are others here waiting for my services already, and you must agree not to disturb them."

At this moment the voodoo's sister appeared in the doorway evidently coming in answer to the man's call.

They spoke together in their jargon, and the woman looked at Trim in a satisfied way, but not as if she were particularly interested in him.

"Here's your five dollars," said Trim, presently; "take it and let me see the show without any more nonsense, or I promise you that there will be a disturbance that you won't like."

"Do you mean to expose us to the police?" asked the woman in a whisper.

"I certainly will if you refuse to let me in."

"Come in then," said the voodoo himself, "you shall see that we have nothing to fear, and I will tell you what I did not like to tell the young lady in the company at Mr. Grey's."

Trim promptly stepped across the threshold and the door was closed, leaving the three in total darkness.

It need hardly be said that the detective had his electric lamp and revolver ready for instant use.

He did not think that these people planned any serious mischief, but there was just a possibility that they were in league with Campo and that they had been hired to trap the detective in their house.

"I will lead the way," said the woman, reaching out and taking Trim by the hand.

She started at once along a narrow hall and presently began to descend stairs.

The voodoo followed them.

They took no pains to go softly, and walked as naturally as anybody might in his own house in the day time.

At the foot of the stairs the woman opened a door and admitted them into a cellar, where a curious sight greeted Trim's eyes.

In the middle of the earthen floor was a large chopping block.

It looked as if it might have been used in a butcher's shop.

On each side of it were two stakes driven into the ground, and on the top of these stakes candles were stuck.

At the moment Trim and the other

entered those were not lighted, but in front of the block there was a little fire burning.

It consisted of only a few chips of wood and it burned slowly, for there was no chimney to carry out the smoke and the air was already thick and foul.

Squatted upon the ground at one end of the cellar were half a dozen silent darkies. Two of them were women.

They stared hard at the voodoo and gave curious glances at Trim, but made no movement.

Over in another corner sat a very old darkey who made it his business from time to time to put fresh chips upon the little fire.

There was a covered basket by his side; above his head was a shelf on which was a large hatchet and a number of long knives.

"These people are our clients," remarked the woman in a low tone, "and you must take your place with them and await your turn."

The voodoo having arrived in the cellar paid no further attention to Trim.

Stooping over the little fire he picked upa burning stick and lighted the candles beside the chopping block.

Trim joined the group of clients at the end of the cellar, wondering what sort of ceremony was about to take place and how long it would be.

Having lighted the candles the voodoo stood beside the block and spoke rapidly in his jargon for nearly a minute.

All the blacks looked at him as if they were spellbound.

The woman did no translating this time, but crouched on the ground near the fire and kept up a low mumbling which was sometimes like a dismal song and sometimes like the whining of a sick dog.

At the end of his speech the voodoo turned to the old darkey in the corner, who at once hobbled to his feet and brought the basket to the block, then he returned and took the hatchet from the shelf and laid that beside the block.

The voodoo took the hatchet, raised the cover of the basket and took a live hen from it.

The hen cackled and struggled, but the black man evidently understood how to handle the bird, for as calmly as if he were slicing bread, he held the hen upon the block and severed its head with a single blow.

At this all the darkies in the room ducked their heads several times and muttered in their peculiar jargon.

The voodoo talked rapidly all the time, and making strange gestures held the hen over the fire in such a way that a few drops of blood fell upon the flames.

Then he tossed the body to the ground and stooped close over the fire until it seemed to Trim as if his eyes would be blinded by the smoke and heat.

He had stopped his talking, the woman had ceased her mumbling song, and all the darkies in the room now squatted forward with their brows upon the dirt.

They remained thus for a long time, silent and motionless, save as their bodies quivered now and again with the strain of their uncomfortable positions and the excitement of what, to them, was an awful ceremony.

"What an outrageous humbug this is," thought Trim; "he is pretending to read the future in the smoke of that fire, and pretty soon he will persuade these poor ignorant people that he knows their fates.

"They've probably given him the last dimes and nickels they possess in order to take part in this monstrous proceeding.

"I'd give five dollars for a breath of fresh air. I wonder if I've got to suffocate here until he has told all the rest of them what he doesn't know."

Presently the voodoo stood up suddenly and drew a long breath. Then he raised the hatchet and brought it hard down upon the chopping-block so that it stuck there.

At this signal the darkies sat up and looked at the voodoo expectantly.

"The fates are merciless toward Miss De Leon," said the voodoo in deep tones addressing Trim, "her end is near; it will come by violence."

"By the stab of a knife?" suggested Trim sarcastically.

"Perhaps," returned the voodoo solemnly, "or it may be by a bullet from a pistol, and there is only one way by which it can be avoided."

"And what is that?" asked Trim.

"There is a charm," answered the

voodoo, "which she can wear that will protect her from the enemies who seek her life, but this charm is hard to obtain and can't be got without great danger."

"Can you get it?" asked Trim.

"I can, but I must be paid for it."

"Will it cost a good deal?"

"Not less than a thousand dollars."

"I don't doubt that she will pay it," remarked Trim starting toward the cellar door. "I'll report the matter to her, and meantime you might let me know, if you can, how long she will have to think it over?"

The voodoo scowled. He understood the sarcastic ring in Trim's voice.

"Miss De Leon," he said severely, "believes in my powers and she will pay that sum. If you are in earnest you will tell her that she will be safe for one week, but after that time if she is not ready to buy the charm I can do nothing and the fates will work their will with her."

"All right," said Trim, "I'll tell her."

The darkies who were waiting their turns to be told the future, looked at Trim with great interest.

Probably it seemed to them that one who could talk easily of raising a thousand dollar to pay for a charm must be a very great person.

The voodoo's sister opened the cellar door for Trim and accompanied him up the stairs.

As they were going through the narrow hall to the front door she said:

"He will really get you the charm if you can persuade Miss De Leon to pay for it."

"It will be of great interest to us, for we want to go away from here to our old home in the West India Islands."

"All right," said Trim, "I think we can manage that."

"I hope you will!" she said earnestly.

Trim found genuine delight in the fresh air outside.

"I don't believe that time was altogether wasted," he reflected. "In the first place it shows that the voodoo isn't in league with Campo or with the plot against Miss De Leon.

"He's simply a money-making humbug. He's a shrewd one, and he could tell from Miss De Leon's manner while at Grey's that she was a victim of superstition, and so he worked upon her fears in the very hope that she would send somebody to him and so be induced to buy a charm.

"The voodoo doesn't suspect that anything has happened to her already.

"It's an outrage that he should swindle those poor ignorant blacks, and if he wants to get to the West Indies again where he belongs, I reckon I can fix that for him after I've got through with this case.

"Meantime it's a satisfaction to know that he was not mixed up in a conspiracy against Miss De Leon's life, but I had hoped to get some trace of Campo there."

CHAPTER V.

THE "GREEN EYE" RESTORED.

By this time it was not far from daybreak and Trim returned to his hotel considerably puzzled as to what course he ought to take for pushing his investigation as rapidly as possible.

Sleep was the first thing needful, and to get this he threw himself upon a lounge with his clothes on, making up his mind to awake in just three hours.

He did so to a minute, and when his eyes opened a new idea occurred to him, which he instantly prepared to follow up. Without stopping for breakfast he went at once to the Crescent apartment house. On the way he called at a druggist's and purchased a small quantity of chemicals.

When he arrived at the house he learned that Miss De Leon was resting quietly, but that she had not yet recovered consciousness, and that there was no probability that she would do so for several days.

"I've got to work this thing out without any clew from her," thought Trim, "and the first thing to establish is the fact that her brother had no direct hand in the crime."

"Has Miss De Leon's room been disturbed?" he asked from the baker.

"De one whar she was stabbed?" the darky responded. "No, sah."

"You are sure that nothing has been taken away?"

"Nothin', sah; none ob mus don't dare to go in."

"All right, then, I'm going in there and I don't want to be disturbed."

After Trim had entered the chamber he closed and locked the door; then he turned his attention to the bureau.

On it was the decanter of wine and the broken glass just as he had seen them the night before.

He took the broken glass to the window and held it up to the light, taking care not to spill any of the contents.

He saw at once what he had not noticed the night before, that the color of the liquid in the glass was different from the color of the wine.

Having satisfied himself on this point he put the glass carefully down upon the bureau, got down upon his hands and knees and felt all over the carpet in that vicinity. He presently picked up two fragments of glass that fitted into the break of the wineglass and nearly filled it.

"There's a little of it missing yet," he thought, "but it doesn't matter, this is enough."

He put the broken pieces beside the wineglass upon the bureau and then turned his attention to the place on the carpet which had been stained by blood from Miss De Leon's wound.

He examined this first with the microscope, and then applied his chemicals to it, working carefully and long.

Occasionally he made a memorandum of his observations upon a piece of note paper.

After a time he seemed to be satisfied with the result of his study, and drawing a long breath of relief looked at his watch; it was nearly ten o'clock.

"Time enough yet," he muttered while his lips curled in a queer smile.

Next he took from his pocketbook the bunch key that he had picked up on the floor when he first entered the room the night before.

It will be remembered that this was blood-stained also.

Trim examined this stain as he had the mark on the carpet, first with a microscope and then by chemical tests.

He made notes of what he observed upon a separate sheet of paper.

After he had done this to his satisfaction he compared his notes.

Without going into the scientific details, what Trim discovered was this: That the blood on the carpet did not come from the same person as that upon the key.

They differed very largely, and when he had proven this fact he turned his attention to the liquid in the broken wineglass.

He had already reasoned that the man who had attempted to murder Miss De Leon, being greatly excited and unnerved by the deed, had rushed at once to the decanter in order to get a bracer.

That in his excitement he had not been able to hold the glass steadily, and that it had broken against his teeth.

He had further reasoned that the criminal had cut his lips then upon the sharp edges of the glass.

This theory was justified in a short time by discovering with his microscope and chemicals that the liquid in the glass was wine mixed with a few drops of blood.

He further found that the blood in the wine was exactly the same as that found upon the key.

When he had come to this conclusion he again consulted his watch; it was a quarter to eleven.

His mind was working rapidly, and he had become fully convinced that he knew who the would-be murderer was and just how it came about that the crime was committed.

He was more certain than ever that Campo was the criminal, but it yet remained to prove that to the satisfaction of others, and the first step in that proof would be to make it certain that Richard De Leon was innocent.

There was a scientific way to do this.

The blood upon the key and in the glass showed signs of a peculiar condition which is very unusual. Not one man in ten thousand would have blood like that.

It would be a long step toward proving Richard De Leon's innocence to compare a drop of his blood with that found in the glass and upon the key.

If it was unlike then it would be easy to show that De Leon was not in the room at the time the attempted murder took place.

Trim again looked at his watch. The

minutes were flying, but he was too interested in his scientific investigation to drop the matter at that stage.

Carefully packing up the scientific evidence and placing the notes he had taken in his pocketbook he started from the flat to go to police headquarters.

Madam De Leon saw him as he was going through the hall.

"Ah, Mr. Carter," she said dismally, "I suppose you are still at work."

"Very busy, madam," he responded.

"I have hopes for my daughter," she went on, "the doctor thinks that she will recover, and for that I am very thankful to you, for without your prompt assistance he says that she would have died. I am grateful——"

"Please don't mention it," interrupted Trim. "I like to have people grateful, of course, but the satisfaction of doing my work well is really enough."

"I suppose so," said Madam De Leon drearily, "but I was going to say that you will have to admit that you were hasty last night in speaking of restoring the 'green eye' by noon time.

"That is beyond your power, and I am sorry to say that the loss of such a valuable gem——"

"It is not yet noon," interrupted Trim; "until then you mustn't accuse me of senseless boasting."

He smiled as he said that, and Madam De Leon looked doubtful.

Trim did not wait for her to say anything else, but bade her good-morning and hastened away.

At police headquarters, where he arrived a few minutes later, he sought the chief keeper of the prison and told him what he wanted.

"A drop of Richard De Leon's blood!" he exclaimed in amazement, "why I don't see how you're going to get it."

"Ask it of him!" exclaimed Trim.

"But I don't believe he'd give it. It's against the law, any way, I think, for it would raise a fearful sensation if you were to come in here and bleed a prisoner."

"Bosh! I only want a drop—and it may be the means of saving him from the gallows."

"In other words," said the keeper, "if he gives you a drop of his blood you'll let him have the rest."

"I wouldn't promise that," Trim responded, "for I'm thinking he's got crimes enough to answer for. But no matter. I'm in a hurry. Just bring him out here and let's see what he says."

The keeper shrugged his shoulders but complied with Trim's request.

A moment later, therefore, Richard De Leon stood before them. He looked sullenly at Trim, saying nothing.

"De Leon," said Trim earnestly, "I don't much wonder that you didn't tell what you knew last night when there were so many people in your room, but you'd better let me know now."

"How is my sister?" asked De Leon.

"In a very serious condition."

"Has she recovered consciousness?"

"No."

"Then I have nothing to say."

"Are you aware?" asked Trim, "that the evidence is all against you and that many a man has been hanged on less evidence?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, whatever else you may be guilty of you certainly want to be free from this charge of attempted murder, don't you?"

"I suppose so."

"I know one way to settle it."

"How?"

"Let me take a drop of your blood."

De Leon recoiled and an expression of horror came upon his face.

"No, sir. No monkey business of that kind around me," he exclaimed.

"I don't mean to do you an injury," Trim insisted, "but on the contrary a service."

"I'll get along without it, thanks!"

"I told you," remarked the prison keeper, "that the thing wouldn't go."

"All right, then," said Trim with a sigh, "I'm sorry but if it won't go, it won't, and this man will be hanged for his own folly."

"I'm not guilty!" exclaimed De Leon, "but I know just what you're up to. You want to poison me or play some other low-down trick upon me."

"Look out!" exclaimed Trim suddenly, pointing to a part of the room back of where De Leon was standing.

Both De Leon and the prisoner turned around to see what he meant.

Trim quietly stepped forward and put his hand up to De Leon's neck.

"Ouch!" exclaimed the latter, clapping his hand upon his neck and turning about again.

Trim was laughing.

"What have you done now?" cried the prisoner.

"I've got the drop of blood I was after, that's all."

De Leon rubbed a sore spot on his neck and looked incredulous and angry.

The keeper was rather put out too.

"What have you done, Carter?" he demanded.

Trim opened his hand and showed a hypodermic syringe.

"I've tapped him," said the detective. "The wound on his neck is about as big as a mosquito bite and not half as serious.

"By pricking him with a needle at the end of this tube and holding the bulb pressed together until the needle was under his skin, and then letting the bulb expand, I've drawn out two or three drops of blood which I shall now examine at my leisure to prove this man's innocence."

De Leon stared in amazement, rubbing his neck all the time and looking as if he would like to assault the detective if there was only a fair chance for downing him.

"Well," said the prison keeper, "you've got what you came for I suppose, but it don't seem to me quite the right way to go about business."

"It was a case of 'git thar,' my friend," retorted Trim. "I haven't done any harm, but I was just bound to have that drop of blood and I've got it, see!

"I'll tell you more about it later; I've got to go now."

He looked at his watch, and seeing that it was twenty minutes to twelve, hurriedly left the prison.

Although he was burning with curiosity to make a chemical test of De Leon's blood, he let that wait until he had visited a safety deposit vault.

He was recognized there by the keeper, and admitted to a corridor, where there were a number of boxes.

Trim produced a key to one of these boxes and opened it.

There was nothing in it but a single small plush-covered box.

Trim removed this, locked the box and went out.

He found an empty cab near by which he engaged and in which he was driven to the Crescent apartment house.

He arrived there just as the clock in a neighboring church tower began to strike twelve.

At the last stroke of the clock he stepped from the elevator upon the third floor and rang the bell to the De Leon's apartment.

The door was opened by the butler, who showed him at once into the sitting-room, where Madam De Leon sat with the physician who was in attendance upon her and her daughter.

"Just noon I believe, madam," said Trim, and presenting the box—"permit me, therefore, to restore you the 'green eye.'"

He thereupon opened the box and displayed the wonderfully beautiful emerald which had been twice lost from the De Leon's possession and which for the second time Trim restored to them.

Madam De Leon's eyes opened wide with astonishment and delight.

"You have kept your word," she cried, "and I suppose you have the thief in custody."

"No," said Trim rather grimly, "I'm sorry to say that I haven't, but I shall try to capture him, though I will not make any prophecy as to when it can be done."

"But if you haven't captured the thief how did you get possession of the stone? It was certainly in my daughter's room last night——"

"There is where you are mistaken, Madam De Leon," said Trim; "there is no reason why I should make a mystery of this matter.

"When I recovered this emerald for you a few days ago I had every reason to believe that an attempt would be made very soon to take it away from you again.

"It was impossible for me for various reasons to tell you why I thought so.

"I don't think that you or your daughter would have believed me or

would have done what I wanted to advise about the 'green eye.' "

"What would your advice have been?" asked Madam De Leon.

"I should have advised you either to sell the stone and deposit your money as usual in a bank, or else lock the stone up in a safety deposit vault where thieves could not get at it."

"And why didn't you advise us to do this? It was your business to do so. You should have proteced your clients——"

"I did what I thought was safest for the stone, madam; I locked it up myself and the article I restored to you was simply a piece of glass made in imitation of the emerald. It was that that the thief stole last night.

"As I said, I expected that an effort would be made to get it and I tried to keep your daughter in view so as to protect her from harm.

"This was impossible, but I shall be satisfied if she recovers her health and strength.

"Meantime here is the genuine 'green eye' and I now advise you earnestly either to lock it up or sell it before it brings you any more trouble."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAKE TURNS UP AGAIN.

Madam De Leon turned to the physician.

"Doctor," she said, "I must go at once and see that this troublesome jewel is placed again in the safety deposit vault."

"Your health, madam," began the the physician——.

"Do you think," she interrupted, "that I can get well while I am overcome with anxiety about this gem?

"I shall never sleep as long as it is in the house, and I am certain that if I am once sure that it is where it will bring me no more trouble, I shall recover strength all the quicker."

"I presume you are right, madam," said the doctor thoughtfully, "it will be better than all the medicine I can give you to put that stone where it can do you no more harm."

"I shall want Mr. Carter to go with me," she said, "for I don't think that any of us are safe even on the public street as long as the 'green eye' is where it might be seized."

"Quite right, madam," Trim assented. "I'll go with you."

Madam De Leon at once summoned a servant to order a carriage, and while she was getting ready to go, Trim asked the physician about the possibilities of Miss De Leon's recovery.

"I think there is no doubt that she will get well," the physician repsonded.

"And when do you think she will be able to answer any question I might like to ask her?"

"I am afraid that will be several days away. "Tough luck," thought Trim; "if she could talk I believe she could give me a clew to Campo's whereabouts, and I think she would, too, for after this experience with him I don't believe she would care to stand in the way of his arrest.

"She must know now, or will when she recovers, that his love for her was a mere pretense, his object being to get possession of her property.

"Well, I've got to keep on in my own blind way, and if the plans I have laid to get a clew as to Campo don't succeed, perhaps luck will help me."

No time was lost in taking the 'green eye' back to the deposit vault where it was formerly kept.

As soon as this had been accomplished, Trim said good-day to Madam De Leon and went to his hotel for the purpose of examining the drop of blood that he had taken from Richard De Leon.

The result of this examination was to prove absolutely that Richard had no hand in the attack upon his sister.

His blood showed none of the peculiarities that were found in the stain upon the key and in the wineglass.

Trim took his notes on the matter to the chief of police and explained his theory.

"There is no doubt," he said, "that the attack on Miss De Leon was made by one man only; my belief is that that man was Paul Campo, and that he gained admission to the flat early in the evening while the servants were out for a walk."

"Is there any evidence that he forced the lock of the apartment?" asked the chief.

"Oh, no, he opened the door with a key."

"How do you think he obtained the key?"

"I think Miss De Leon gave it to him."

The chief opened his eyes in astonishment.

"You don't like to say that this is all nonsense, chief," remarked Trim with a smile, "but that's what you're thinking."

"Well, it's pretty hard to imagine that Miss De Leon would give a key to this rascal——"

"Don't forget," interrupted Trim, "that the young lady had been infatuated with him for a long time. I presume she has not believed the damaging reports about his character, but if she did that made no difference.

"She was dead in love with him, and when a woman feels that way she will do most anything that seems absurd, hey?"

"You're right there!"

"Very well; the young lady having recovered possession of the 'green eye,' and knowing that it was not my intention to expose the fact that she had invented a robbery to account for its former disappearance, was just as anxious as ever to see Campo and to do him a good turn.

"She knew or suspected that I was on the lookout for Campo, and quite likely he told her himself that he was in danger from me.

"I presume he begged a chance to talk with her, and as it was impossible for them to meet without danger in the day time, or in any public place, I presume that he persuaded her to let him see her in the secrecy of her own room.

"To accomplish this it was necessary for him to get in there without attracting observation, so she sent him her key and he let himself in when the servants were out.

"I don't think she would have found Campo in her room when she returned from Mr. Gray's party if he had been able to find the 'green eye' during her absence.

"She had the 'green eye' with her at the party. She knew that she was to meet Campo when she returned home.

"She expected him to propose an elopement; she didn't know what to do about it.

"Although she loved him, she feared him; therefore, being superstitious, she was wildly anxious to hear what sort of prophecy the voodoo, who was at Mr. Grey's, would make about her future.

"She is the only one who can tell what happened in her room when she returned, but my belief is that by the time she returned, Campo had become impatient and that he demanded the stone; probably she hesitated and that caused him to stab her.

"The deed probably unnerved him, and he tried to brace himself with a glass of wine. That led to the spilling of his own blood.

"To be brief, chief, if we can once find Campo we won't need any evidence from Miss De Leon to convict him, for if a test of his blood shows the same peculiarities that have been found upon the key and in the wineglass, it will be proof that he was the one who attempted murder."

"That's right," said the chief, "your reasoning is perfect and your chain of evidence is complete; so far as the police are concerned, we can't find any trace of Campo, but I suppose you have plans laid for trapping him somehow."

"Yes, one plan that was made several days ago."

Trim then told the chief how he had substituted a false piece of glass cut in imitation of the "green eye" for the real jewel.

"It was this fake stone," he concluded, "that was stolen from the flat, and it will be that fake that will expose Campo.

"He may try to offer it for sale or as a pledge for a loan; if he does I shall be informed.

"I have notified every pawnbroker and dealer in jewels in New Orleans to be on the lookout for just such an article and to send me word if such a thing is offered."

"Campo may discover the fake before he tries to realize on the gem," suggested the chief.

"Yes, he may, but I think nevertheless that the winning clew will come through that fake just the same."

Trim spoke with rather more confidence than he really felt, for although he had no doubt that Campo could be captured in time, he was a good deal worried lest he should not succeed in doing this within the limit set by Nick Carter.

The young detective had devoloped a theory of the case that was undoubtedly correct, except possibly as to details and he had proven that the prisoner whom the police believed to be guilty was innocent, but when it came to catching the real criminal, luck seemed to be dead against him.

Of course Richard De Leon was not released after Trim's investigation of the drops of blood.

He was still held on a charge of being an accomplice in the crime, for the sight of the fake stone in his room and other evidence was sufficient for holding him.

For two days after his interview with the chief, Trim was busy in making visits to pawnbrokers and to dealers in precious stones.

He had called on all such persons in the city before going to Mr. Grey's party, to warn them to be on the lookout for a fake emerald.

They all agreed to do so and to let him know if anything suspicious occurred.

It seemed as if a good many suspicious things occurred, for every time Trim went into the St. Charles Hotel he found a message waiting for him from some dealer or pawnbroker.

He faithfully looked up every matter thus brought to his attention, but in every case found that whatever it was that had aroused the suspicions of the pawnbroker, it had nothing to do with the De Leon affair.

He went two or three times daily to the Cresent apartment house to inquire for Miss De Leon's health. The answer was the same every time:

"She was resting quietly and doing as well as could be expected under the circumstanes."

Meantime nothing happened at Campo's abandoned apartment near Lee Circle to give the detective a clew.

The time set by Nick Carter had half gone, and he was no further along than he was at the beginning. Trim had never been so anxious or worried in his life.

The worst of it was that he could do nothing except wait or follow up the false clews that were continually being brought to him by pawnbrokers.

There were just three days left for him to complete the investigation or give it up when he set out from his hotel to look up another clew that had been sent to him by a pawnbroker in a distant part of the city.

A street car took him to within a short distance of the place.

When he arrived there it took him but a few minutes to discover that the clew was false.

He hurried back to the car line, hoping to catch the same car back.

He was greatly annoyed to find that something had gone wrong with the truck of the car so that it could not be moved. No other car would be up from the city for half an hour.

Trim looked around the neighborhood hoping to find a livery stable or to come across a stray hack.

There was no stable within a couple of miles, and as luck would have it, no hack happened to be out that way.

Under ordinary circumstances these facts would not have disturbed him, and he would have walked back to the city cheerfully; but now he was blue, for it seemed as if fate was determined that every little thing should become an obstacle to his plans and hopes.

It was shortly after noon, and as he had breakfasted early he had not walked far before he realized that he was hungry; then he kept his eyes open for a hotel or restaurant, and it was so long before he came to one that he began to think that this was another piece of bad luck.

"Just because I want a square meal," he reflected, grimly, "the restaurant keepers in this part of the town have gone out of business."

He came to a restaurant at last, however, and went in.

Every seat at every table was occupied; it was the time when the employes of a factory near by were taking their dinner.

They crowded the place, and several were waiting their turns to sit down.

Trim turned in exasperation to the cashier:

"Is there any way that I can get something to eat here in a hurry?"

"You can have a private room, sir," the cashier responded.

Trim said he would take it and he was accordingly conducted upstairs to a little room overlooking the street.

There was then some delay in serving him, but the food came at length, and he went at it with a relish.

The bill of fare contained a peculiar southern dish that Trim had learned to like, and he accordingly ordered the waiter to bring it.

Trim had finished the main part of his meal before the waiter returned with the special dish.

The detective leaned back in his chair a little so as to allow the waiter to clear the table and set the new dish down.

The waiter, who had his hands full of dishes, stumbled and in trying to keep from falling held his hands so far forward that his dishes came against Trim.

The detective dodged a little back, and the waiter losing his balance entirely, let everything fall to the floor.

A little exasperated, but more amused at the accident, Trim stooped over to help pick up the wreck.

Just as he bent down there was a crash in the window at his back and something flew across the room, hit the opposite wall and fell to the floor.

It had come with tremendous force, for the hole it made in the glass was a small one, and a deep dent on the wall showed where the article had struck.

"Lord a massy, what's that?" exclaimed the waiter in affright.

Trim caught sight of it as it fell to the floor and jumped to the window.

He was just in time to see a man dressed like an ordinary workman dodging around a corner.

"All right, mister," thought the detective, "I shall know you again."

Then he stepped quickly across the room and found the article that had been hurled in.

It was the fake emerald.

CHAPTER VII.

TRIM ON THE TELEGRAPH WIRE.

Trim tossed a bill to the waiter and rushed down the stairs to the main dining-room.

As he was hurrying out the head waiter, a big overgrown fellow, seized him.

"No, you don't," the head waiter said, "you pay your bill first!"

"I have no money with the waiter!" Trim exclaimed.

"That don't go! You pay your bill here or you'll get into trouble."

"Well, I hate to pay three or four times for a dinner, but I suppose as I'm in a hurry I've got to."

He accordingly thrust a bill into the head waiter's hand and was then allowed to go.

Every second of delay meant greater difficulty for him in the pursuit of the man who had hurled the fake emerald through the window.

As the detective dashed out of the door a man who had been standing there idly turned about suddenly to enter and Trim collided with him; no harm was done except that the detective was delayed a little more.

Having recovered from the shock of running against this man, Trim went on across the street and turned the corner where he had seen the workman.

On the groud just around the corner was a sling such as boys sometimes use for throwing stones at birds.

Trim picked it up as he ran.

"I thought that piece of glass came in with more force," he reflected, "than it could have done if it had been thrown by a man's hand alone."

He thrust the sling in a pocket where he already had the fake emerald and continued on at full speed.

He saw his man not much more than two hundred yards ahead of him, also on the dead run.

It was just after Trim had turned the corner and caught sight of the fugitive that a street car going toward the city appeared on a cross street two or three blocks away.

The fugitive hailed this car and jumped aboard. Trim also shouted for it, but the conductor either did not or would not hear him, and the car passed on.

"I can run as fast as most street cars," thought Trim, "but that one seems to be in a hurry to make up time."

This was undoubtedly the case, for when Trim came to the street where the tracks were, the car was far away and evidently going as fast as the horses could be driven.

"Luck hasn't turned yet," thought Trim, dropping into a walk. "There's no use wasting my breath running after

that car, but I've seen my man, and I'll know him again and will find him, too."

Thinking thus, he took the fake emerald from his pocket and examined it.

On one of its many faces he saw some marks that had not been there when he gave it to the De Leons.

These marks were not easily made out, but after examining them with a magnifying glass as he walked along, Trim saw that they represented two knives crossed.

"The sign of the Nanigos," he said to himself.*

"My suspicions are correct, then. Campo is connected with the secret society of criminals that I had dealings with in Mexico, and his man who threw the piece of glass at me is one of the gang.

"There is no doubt that Campo discovered this fake before he got around to offer it for sale or for a loan.

"When he realized that he had been fooled he scratched the picture of the daggers on the glass with a diamond and got one of his men to throw it at me.

"This is encouraging; it shows that I'm watched by the scoundrels and if I give them time enough they'll make other attempts upon my life and so give me a chance to catch them.

"The trouble is that I can't give them time enough. I must overhaul the man who threw this at me before the day is over."

By this time the street car which the man had taken had gone out of sight around a corner.

Trim hurried on, looking always for a cab that he could hire, and at last found one. He told the driver to follow along the line of car tracks leading to the centre of the city.

The driver, excited by the promise of double pay, whipped up and drove as rapidly as possible.

Trim told him that he wanted to overtake the car that had recently gone along the line toward the city.

They had not gone far when the detective became aware that there was a good deal of excitement in a street through which they were passing.

Men and women were hurrying in the same direction that the carriage was taking, and presently the driver stopped.

"I can't go any further," he explained, and Trim looked out to see what was the matter.

"There's a fire just ahead and the police have roped off the street."

Trim got out, and climbing to the driver's seat, looked over the heads of the crowd and saw that the car he was chasing had been stopped just within the fire lines.

It was less than a block away.

"Of course the fellow has left the car by this time," he thought, "but I may get some information about him from the conductor."

He accordingly paid his driver and forced his way through the jam to the rope, where he had no difficulty in persuading a policeman to admit him within the lines.

The car was deserted by all except the conductor and driver.

Trim learned from them that no passenger had left the car until they came to the fire lines; then all had got out and scattered in different directions.

The conductor thought he remembered that the particular passenger about whom Trim asked had gone in one direction, but the driver was quite as certain that he had gone in another.

"This is the worst run of luck I have ever known," thought Trim as he left the car and looked about for the most convenient way of getting through the fire lines.

As he was about to step from the street to the sidewalk, a line of hose burst and the full force of the water caught Trim in the back.

It sent him stumbling across the walk until he came up against a building.

He was drenched through but not hurt.

Of course he dodged away from the torrent as quickly as possible, and as he was wiping the water from his eyes, he happened to stand so that he was looking at the burning building.

This was on the opposite side of the street. It was a tenement house and the flames had made great headway.

It was thought that all the occupants were out of it, but just as Trim looked

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* "Trim in Mexico," No. 28 New Nick Carter L[illegible]

up he saw a face at a third-story window. He knew it instantly and dashed across the street toward the burning building.

The face he had seen was that of Paul Campo.

Although nobody was allowed within the fire lines except those who had proper business there, the street was nevertheless ailve with men.

Just now a number of firemen rushed to repair the broken hose, and others were trying to raise a tall ladder in order to direct a stream upon the roof of the burning building.

It seemed to be a day of accidents, for just as Trim started across the street the men in charge of the ladder somehow lost their control of it and it began to fall.

A cry of warning went up from a dozen throats, and the noise they made drowned the report of a pistol from the third story window.

Trim saw a flash and the little curl of smoke and in an instant he knew that Campo had fired at him.

It flashed across his mind that this time the desperate villain would aim steadily, and doubtless he did, but it was not the sight of the pistol flash that caused Trim to halt in his run across the street.

He saw that the ladder was coming down upon him and he stopped just as it brushed so closely in front of him that he could feel the rush of air upon his face.

There was a little tingling upon his cheek, but it was not made by Campo's bullet.

It was from a splinter torn off by the bullet from the falling ladder.

Trim leaped across the ladder with a feeling of triumph.

"Luck has turned my way at last," he thought, "for if it hadn't been for that bursting hose, I might not have caught sight of Campo, and he would surely have killed me with that shot if it hadn't been that the falling ladder turned aside the course of the bullet."

The next minute Trim had dashed into the burning house. The firemen were too busy with the fallen ladder to notice him or stop him if they saw what he was about.

The hallway was full of smoke, and as he went up the stairs he could feel the heat of the fire above.

Nothing could have stopped him then, however, and he dashed along the first landing and made for the second flight of stairs without a thought of the danger he was running.

As he was mounting the second flight he could hear hurried footsteps on the floor above.

He had no doubt that this was Campo, and he tried his best to get to the top of the flight in time to head the criminal off. Campo had the start of him, however, and when Trim arrived at the third story landing his man was not in sight.

Beside the detective was an open door and at the end of the hallway in the rear of the building an open window.

Trim entered the room, which was an ordinary sleeping chamber, and snatched up a letter that was lying upon the bureau.

Without pausing to see what it was, he thrust it into his pocket and ran to the open window at the rear of the hall.

This window looked out upon a one-story extension of the main building.

A glance showed Trim what way Campo had taken and what he had done, for just as Trim arrived at the window, a ladder was being drawn away from it by a rope held by somebody out of sight on the ground below the extension.

It was not a fire ladder, but one that may have belonged about the building somewhere.

Campo had evidently placed the ladder there, probably to serve as a means of escape.

Having fired at Trim and missed, he had gone down the ladder, dropped from the extension to the ground and then pulled the ladder away, thus leaving the detective, who had followed him, with no means of pursuing further unless he chose to risk his life by jumping down two stories to the roof of the extension.

Trim had no intention of taking this risk, especially as he saw before him a network of backyards and alleyways in which his enemy might easily conceal himself and make a sudden attack, against which skill and strength would be useless.

Trim was not at all discouraged by the situation now; he had seen his man and now that he knew for a certainty that

Campo was in the city he had no doubt of making a capture.

The next thing for the detective to do of course was to get out of this building.

He turned to descend the stairs up which he had just come, but was driven back by the dense smoke.

The fire had evidently gained new headway somewhere below.

Trim thought for an instant of shutting eyes and mouth and sliding down the banisters, not breathing until he had come to the street, but before he had attempted this risky experiment he heard a crash below, and as the smoke broke away for an instant he looked down and saw that the first flight of stairs had collapsed.

There was no going out that way therefore.

He ran to the front end of the hall and looked out of the window.

Firemen were again trying to raise the ladder that had fallen away from them, but it would be minutes before they could succeed in doing so.

Meantime the building was burning like tinder.

Trim saw that he would have to take to the roof, so up the stairs he went, and when he came to the top floor he saw that a trap door in the roof was open.

It took him but a minute to leap up and catch the edge of the opening and pull himself through it; but he reflected as he did so that the fact that this door was open suggested that the fire was incendiary.

"This hole in the roof," was the way his thoughts ran, "makes a perfect ventilator for the flames below.

"It wouldn't surprise me at all to find that this fire is another piece of crookedness on the part of Campo and his accomplices."

There was no time to think about that.

He heard hoarse cries from the street, which showed that the firemen were getting out of the way for fear the entire building would collapse as the stairs had done.

Even now the detective could feel the building trembling.

It was the highest building in the block.

The building at one side was already in flames, and it would have been sure death to try to escape by leaping to that roof.

On the other side there was no fire as yet, but there appeared to be no way of getting from the second roof to any place of safety.

Nevertheless the roof of this adjoining building would be safer than the one he was on, and accordingly Trim let himself over the edge and dropped.

He came upon a slanting roof and caught hold of the peak to keep from slipping down over the eaves. Then he crawled along to the chimney, which was at the gable end.

Thirty or forty feet below him was the street.

There seemed to be no way to get down, for there was no fire escape on the side of the building, and the ladder which the firemen were struggling with had evidently become hopelessly damaged.

For a moment Trim was puzzled.

The fire was gaining such terrible headway that it would not be many minutes before the building on which he was clinging would catch and it would burn like a basketful of shingles.

He knew that it would be folly to drop from the roof to the street, but as he was looking around for any possible way of escape, he saw that several telegraph wires ran from a pole almost underneath the eaves of this building to another pole further down the street.

"If I were on the eaves," Trim thought, "I believe I could jump far enough to land on those wires, then if they held, I could crawl along them to the pole and shin down that. It's the only way and I've got to try it."

The roof was steep and the shingles old, so that under the best of circumstances it would have been a perilous thing to go down from the gable-peak to the eaves, and what made the matter worse was, that just as Trim had begun to make this descent slowly, a shower of water fell upon the building, wetting the shingles and making them extremely slippery.

Firemen standing at some point where they could not see Trim, had either tired to wet down this adjoining building or aimed their stream at the

other building and had missed, as sometimes happens, and so had thrown their torrent upon him.

It doesn't matter how it happened, the important thing is that the water did come just then and that it made the shingles so slippery that Trim slid down in spite of all his attempts to clutch at them or dig his heels into the wood.

He was in for a fall over the eaves. This being the case, the one way to save himself from sure death was to leap when he came to the roof edge and try to grasp the telegraph wires.

Springing from his hands he came to an upright position about a yard from the eaves, and then, as he slid further down, he jumped with all his might.

A cry of horror went up from hundreds of throats, for just at that instant the crowd caught sight of him.

There were not less than a dozen wires running from one pole to another, and Trim came down upon them after a fall of about ten feet.

If he could have stopped upon one wire only and stepped carefully, it is probable that it would have sustained his weight, but the fall gave his body so much more force that the first wire he struck snapped at once.

There were so many, however, and lying so close together that some of them held, but they swayed back and forth, and if Trim had not kep this head and gripped hard at the wires, he would have been hurled to the ground.

As it was, for two or three seconds he clung there swaying back and forth, clutching first at one wire and then at another, and trying all the time to get his feet upon the lowest one.

He succeeded at length in getting one foot upon a wire while his body lay across two others and his hands grasped a fourth. Both poles were trembling with the strain put upon them, and the detective continued to sway back and forth like a pendulum.

He looked to right and left; the nearest pole was the one next to the burning house.

If he could reach that pole he felt that he would be safe; so he began slowly to edge his way toward it, but his steps were necessarily short, and as he drew nearer, his body causing the wires to sag, made it a hard climb upward.

His progress was watched with breathless excitement by the crowd gathered outside the fire line.

When it was seen that he had a chance for life, firemen tried to hurry up another ladder so as to raise it for him, but the street was now so full of wreckage, to say nothing of the lines of hose and the fire engines, that it was impossible to get a ladder to that point quickly.

Trim had come to within about six feet of the pole and had concluded to jump for it when suddenly the wire upon which his feet were placed snapped.

His body slipped from the other two wires and this brought his whole weight upon the one held in his hands.

Half a second later that snapped, too, but it broke from the pole at the further end, and Trim, clinging to it, swung down hard against the telegraph post.

The shock stunned him, but he clung blindly and unconsciously to the wire and slowly slid down it, bumping against the pole as he went until he came to the ground where he was caught by some firemen who had run to the spot.

The palms of his hands were bleeding, for they had been cut by the wire in his fall, and his face showed signs of what seemed to be severe and dangerous bruises.

CHAPTER VIII.

DANGLING IN MID-AIR.

When Trim opened his eyes and looked around him he was more puzzled than he had been at the time that he was on the roof and saw no way of escape.

It took but a moment, however, for him to get his thoughts together and realize where he was.

He had been taken from the scene of the fire in an ambulance to a hospital, and he was now lying upon a cot under the care of a nurse, who sat near by.

"I say!" said Trim, sitting up suddenly, "what day is it?"

The nurse smiled.

"I thought you'd come around all right," he said, "but you'd better lie down and be quiet."

"What day is it!" insisted Tim.

The nurse told him.

"Well," said Trim blankly, "is it this

week or next?" then he smiled at the absurdity of his question.

The nurse thought his mind was wandering, and Trim promptly proceeded to set the man right.

"I had some business to finish within a certain time," he declared quietly, "and if my time is up then I don't care how long I stay here; if my time isn't up I want to get out and get about it. When was that fire?"

"It occurred only a few hours ago," the nurse responded. "You were brought here about three o'clock in the afternoon, and have been unconscious ever since; it is now nine in the evening."

"Well," asked Trim, "is there anything serious the matter with me?"

"I should say not," replied the nurse; "the surgeon said you were perfectly sound, and the only danger was you would suffer from shock. He wasn't certain but that you might lose your reason."

"Well, I don't think!" retorted Trim, and he began as clearly as ever to reason out the situation in which he found himself.

Campo had again escaped him, and had had several hours in which to get out of the city or hide himself somewhere else.

It was the same with Campo's accomplice, who had thrown the fake emerald through the window.

"I don't believe," Trim thought, "that anything can be gained by getting after them again to-night; in fact I think it will be better to stay in the hospital all night, for I haven't a doubt that Campo knows that I was taken here.

"I'll fool him; "I'll let him think that I was badly done up, and that will throw him off his guard."

Before he lay down again Trim turned to the nurse and asked:

"What have you done with my coat?"

"It is here," was the reply, and the nurse took the garment from a hook and handed it to Trim.

"There was a letter in one of the pockets," said Trim. "Ah! yes, here it is."

He took out the letter that he had snatched from the bureau in the room that he believed to be Campo's, in the burning building.

It proved to be not only useful to him, but of much greater use than he could have dreamed, for it was written by Richard De Leon to Campo himself, and it was convincing proof that the two were in league to get the valuable emerald into their possession.

It was apparent from the letter that Richard had planned to get the emerald himself, and that was undoubtedly the reason of his call at the Crescent apartment house on the night of the attempted murder.

His courage had weakened after waiting for his sister and he had gone away without knowing that Campo all the time was concealed in his sister's room.

"That settles Richard De Leon," thought Trim as he replaced the letter in his coat pocket.

"When this case comes for trial he will be in for a heavy sentence for complicity in the crime.

"Beginning to-morrow morning I shall have two days left in which to get the chief villain in the affair.

"I wonder whether my luck will run good or bad? I must say that although this letter is a piece of good luck, that most everything that has happened to me so far has been bad.

"I don't know, though," and then he began philosophically to think of the many little accidents that had delayed him, all of which, nevertheless, had seemed to be the means of putting him further forward in his search.

It was a series of little accidents that had brought him to the fire after the man whom he was pursuing had left the place.

It was an accident that made him see Campo, an accident that had saved him from Campo's bullet, and as he thought it over, Trim began to believe that his fall upon the telegraph wires and his departure from the place unconscious in an ambulance would prove to be a piece of good luck which might lead him to the best of success on the following day.

Nevertheless when the next day came Trim was at considerable loss how to proceed.

Of course he notified the police that he had seen Campo, and they had the entire department warned to look out for the fellow. The police, however, seemed to be as powerless to help now as they had been

before, and Trim realized fully that he would have to depend upon his own exertions, or his luck, to make a capture.

It was about an hour after he had left police headquarters when he was passing a new building.

It was a sky-scraping structure intended for office use. It was nearly done, but there were no windows in it and workmen were still busy from top to bottom putting on the finishing touches.

There was a high wind blowing just then, and Trim ducked his head to avoid getting his eyes full of dust.

An extra fierce gust of wind caught his hat and sent it flying upward.

He raised his head and threw up his hands to catch the hat, and in so doing saw a man upon a staging suspended from the roof, who struck him at once as the one who had thrown the fake emerald through the window.

The man was at work upon the staging apparently painting.

Trim promptly made up his mind that he would have a closer sight of that man.

Accordingly when he had recovered his hat he went into the unfinished building and climbed several flights of stairs until he came to the top story.

The staging was about on a level with this story.

Trim walked quietly about for a moment until through one of the windows he caught sight of the man, and was certain that it was the one he was after.

"We'll make no mistake about this," thought the detective; "he shan't have a chance to get another lead on me."

Trim went straight to the window and stepped out upon the swinging platform.

At that moment the man he wanted was half kneeling and so busy about his work that he did not notice the new comer.

Trim went straight up to him, and was about to touch him when he heard a slight creaking sound from the direction of the roof at the other end of the platform. He was instantly aware of a new and terrible danger.

He looked up just in time to catch sight of Campo's face disappearing over the edge of the roof, but that was not so exciting as the other thing he saw, and that was that Campo had cut the rope holding that end of the platform.

Of course the platform began to fall instantly.

The man whom Trim was about to make a prisoner felt it giving way as soon as Trim did, and with a terrible cry he clutched for the wall of the building as if he could dig his fingers into the brick work.

Trim instantly caught the man with one arm, and with the other laid hold of the rope that held the end of the platform upon which they were standing.

A wild thought rushed through his mind. Would Campo cut that rope also? If he should do so there would be an end of both Trim and his prisoner.

It was evident that Campo had not cut that rope, although he might try to do so at any moment.

It held firm now, but Trim was supporting not only his own weight, but that of his prisoner with one hand; moreover the prisoner, overcome with fright was struggling violently.

"Hold still!" cried Trim, "or I'll drop you to the ground."

This threat had the desired effect, and the man became as quiet as if he were a bundle of straw.

The platform was swaying a little from side to side, but it presently came to rest against the building.

Trim then got his knees so that he could clutch the boards with them, and that gave him a chance to raise himself an inch or two upon the rope.

It was a hard tug, for he was holding double his own weight with one arm, but his life was at stake, and he could not endure the thought of sacrificing even a cirminal to save his own as long as there was a chance of pulling both out alive.

So inch by inch, gripping the platform with his knees and straining with his arm, he pulled himself and his man up until his hand was level with the window; then he suddenly let go the rope, caught the window ledge and cried out to his prisoner to do the same.

This the fellow did. Trim, then having both arms free, scrambled in hastily and helped pull his frightened prisoner after him.

This affair had seemed to the detective to occupy many minutes, but, as a matter of fact, only a few seconds had passed.

Workmen hurried to the spot and arrived at the window just as Trim crawled in. The detective, realizing that there was yet time to purse Campo, clapped handcuffs upon his prisoner's wrists and left him among the surprised workmen.

There was a sound of feet clattering downstairs.

Trim leaped for the stairway and went down with long bounds. The stairs in the upper part of the building were unfinished, but after going down two or three flights he came to one where the bannisters had been set up, then he did his sliding act, and at the end of the second flight that he went down in this fashion, he came full against Campo.

The latter, who had not expected this kind of pursuit, had not time to draw his revolver, but he made a stubborn resistance, giving Trim a hard fight to the finish. The detective overpowered him at length, however, and within an hour appeared at headquarters with both prisoners. His investigation was successfully finished, and he had a day and a half to spare from the time limit set by his chief.

The evidence against Campo and Richard De Leon as well as the workman who was their accomplice was too complete to allow of any hope of the prisoners' acquittal.

It was made stronger by the recovery of Miss De Leon on the day following the arrest.

She then told the story of the attack upon her, and it proved to be substantially as Trim had reasoned it out.

As the evidence was pieced together bit by bit, it became so strong that Richard De Leon broke down and made a complete confession.

From this the local police were enabled to arrest a few others who were connected with Campo as members of a branch of the Nanigos.

The society had not been large in New Orleans, for Campo preferred to have it limited to only a few members who would do his bidding, and it was through their crimes mainly that he kept himself supplied with money.

Richard De Leon was not a direct member of that gang, but he had been drawn into the work by his own need of money and his perfect willingness to conspire with Campo against membes of his own family in order to get it.

Among other things that came out when the various prisoners were examined, was the fact that the wreck of the Mexican Central Railway train, described in the last issue of this library, in which Trim had so narrowly escaped with his life, was caused by the Nanigos, who had thus hoped to kill the detective who had broken up their branch in Mexico.

The track-walker and his accomplice who caused that wreck, and who afterward attacked Trim in the tunnel, were under orders to kill him, but they had disobeyed because they thought that they could rob him and then leave that part of the country without reporting to other members of their society.

The fact that Trim escaped them led them to go to New Orleans and seek protection of Campo, who was known to be the leader of a gang there.

Campo had been obliged to protect them for a time in order to prevent an exposure of his own connection with the society.

The persistency of the detective and his good fortune in escaping the various attempts upon his life, resulted finally in the complete breaking up of the society in that city.

Before he left New Orleans Trim looked up his peculiar friends, the voodoos. He was satisfied that they had had nothing to do with Campo or the Nanigos, but he knew that such people were troublesome because of the way they aroused the superstitious fears of the negroes.

The detective had a plan for getting them out of the city, but when he went to their headquarters he discovered that they had gone already.

It seemed probable that they feared the cool young white man who had called on them, and had fled before he could expose them.

Trim, therefore, went on to New York, where he immediatey became interested in other matters.

The first of these of importance is described in "Trim's Combination Case; or, Two Clients After the Same Man," No. 25, New Nick Carter Library.

[THE END.]

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